

P 111231Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9559  
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMCONSUL CHENNAI  
AMCONSUL MUMBAI  
AMCONSUL TORONTO  
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
USMISSION GENEVA  
DIA WASHINGTON DC  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000278

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: KARUNA JOINS THE SLFP AND BECOMES A  
GOVERNMENT MINISTER

REF: A. COLOMBO 266

[1](#)B. 08 COLOMBO 1102

[1](#)C. 08 COLOMBO 1036

[1](#)D. 08 COLOMBO 975

[1](#)E. 08 COLOMBO 695

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) After months of growing tension between former comrades-in-arms Sivanethurai Chandrakanthan ("Pillaiyan") and Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan ("Karuna Amman") (refs C, D, E), Karuna officially left the TMVP (a breakaway faction of the LTTE formerly known as the "Karuna group") and joined President Rajapaksa's Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) at a party meeting on March 9. President Rajapaksa welcomed Karuna and 2000 TMVP members into the party. The President promptly elevated Member of Parliament Karuna to the position of Non-Cabinet Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation. Karuna's appointment brings the total of Cabinet, Non-Cabinet, and Deputy Ministers in the Sri Lankan government to 105.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Eastern Provincial Council Chief Minister Pillaiyan is now left to run a smaller but more loyal TMVP from his base in Trincomalee. Two days before Karuna's official ascension to the SLFP, Pillaiyan had announced the "official disarming" of the TMVP during a ceremony in which cadres loyal to the Chief Minister turned over 150 weapons and 7,000 rounds of ammunition (ref A). At the time, Karuna stated that his cadres would not disarm until they were full members of the SLFP (ref A); however, during the ceremony there was no announcement that Karuna's supporters would surrender their weapons in a similar fashion.

[1](#)3. (C) The TMVP had been effectively split for months between factions loyal to Karuna and Pillaiyan. Ever since Karuna's return from his detention in the U.K. on immigration fraud charges (ref E), Pillaiyan and his advisors have expressed their concern about the role Karuna intended to play both within the party and in the Eastern Province. Many in the Eastern Province have told us that they believed Karuna's role was to keep Pillaiyan in line and subservient to his political masters in Colombo (ref D). After the November 14 assassination of his close advisor "Ragu," Pillaiyan all but openly accused Karuna of ordering the hit (ref D). Human rights groups in the East have told us that they believe Karuna's cadres, working in coordination with government

security forces, are responsible for the majority of disappearances, extra-judicial killings and incidents of torture that have occurred in the province since the defeat of the LTTE.

14. (C) COMMENT: The test now for President Rajapaksa will be whether he can use Minister Karuna's membership within the SLFP to achieve progress on child soldiers, the disarmament of paramilitaries and an improved human rights record that will bring tangible benefits to the local population of the East.

BLAKE